



The Az POST **Newsletter**

Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board

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Positive action reduces attrition at the Arizona Law Enforcement Academy

Several months after taking over as Commander of the Arizona Law Enforcement Academy Dean Nyhart asked himself, *"Have you ever had the experience where you just sense something's wrong but can't put your finger on it?"* Dean was referring to the fact that between 1999 and 2005 the cadet attrition rate at ALEA rose from around 10% to over 32% per year! Rather than simply accept that the quality of recruits had plummeted, he decided to study the problem and find solutions. In Commander Nyhart's words, *"In a period where finding qualified people for law enforcement is increasingly difficult; the filling of recruit positions becomes critical and graduating competent recruits a must. I decided to identify the possible causations for this phenomenon and seek reasonable solutions."*

Dean identified a number of issues, and along with members of his staff de-

veloped a strategy for change at ALEA. The stated goal that emerged is "Reduce recruit attrition rates by identifying, modifying, eliminating or limiting unnecessary stress mechanisms and develop long-term operational strategies to enhance basic training effectiveness without diminishing training standards, agency expectations, individual behavior and conduct, or principals of adult learning."

To implement this worthy goal Commander Nyhart and his staff instituted twelve specific procedural and operational changes to improve the retention of qualified cadets, while continuing to identify and eliminate those who simply do not possess the personal qualities, skills and abilities necessary to become competent peace officers. Among these specific remedies is one directed toward how staff should relate to cadets. It states in part,

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Arizona Regional Community Policing Institute committed to service in 2006

The Institute moves into 2006 with a strong commitment to continue offering exceptional, no-cost training and technical assistance that can be taken anywhere in Arizona. This includes AZ POST approved classes on leadership, ethics, anti-terrorism, domestic violence, and of course, community policing. For additional details, please refer to the AZ POST Training Calendar or call the Institute at 602-223-2514 to have a course brought to your department.

The Institute added some new courses in 2005 that they hope to offer more frequently this year. Among these new offerings are the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program which is an outgrowth of the growing trend in Commu-

nity Based Policing Initiatives that originated from President Bush's USA Freedom Corps. This four-hour course is intended for volunteer coordinators of law enforcement agencies, and any personnel involved in the recruitment, selection, and management of their volunteer staff. Attendees will receive information on how to establish or enhance their volunteer program including how to deal with management issues, effectively communicate with others about their program, and acquire valuable resources.

Another new course on crime abatement was in big demand the last half of 2005 filling up quickly every time it was offered. It is designed to give public offi-

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Meet your Arizona POST Board



Det. Robert Thompson

The Newsletter would like to introduce POST's newest Board member, Detective Robert Thompson, of the Nogales Police Department. Robert was appointed by Governor Janet Napolitano on September 8, 2005 to replace Nogales Lt. Octavio Gradillas, who was required to vacate the "peer member" Board seat due to his recent promotion to Lieutenant (Congratulations Octavio!).

A native of Nogales, Detective Thompson grew up with four sisters and worked at a variety of jobs after High School to help support his family. He has served as a member of the Nogales Police Department for the past 9 years, first as a police dispatcher, then as an evidence technician, and finally gaining his peace officer certification in 2000 after finishing number one in his academy class. Robert was promoted to Detective in 2003.

Beside law enforcement, Robert is very passionate about computers. Even though he has no formal training he was instrumental in bringing computerization to the Nogales Police Department and training employees in computer skills.

When Robert is not on duty or working on POST issues, you will find him racing his motorcycle.

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A message from Executive Director Tom Hammarstrom

"Gut Check"

When Ernest Hemmingway wrote, "I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after," he may have placed his finger squarely on the central issue of ethics in the law enforcement profession.

Throughout my career I've noticed that when I may have been considering an unethical choice my gut let me know about it. If I accepted a discounted meal, it not only didn't "feel good after," it didn't taste good either. If my treatment of a citizen or offender was less than professional my stomach snatched me off immediately.

As a group, peace officers possess a remarkably sensitive and accurate moral compass. We select our members for that very quality, and we train them to ensure that they know exactly where ethical true North lies. The emotional feedback it provides when an officer starts down the wrong path may be the most important tool we have for maintaining integrity in our profession. We must remind ourselves and those around us to pay attention to what our guts are telling us. To paraphrase Dr. Timothy Leary; if it doesn't feel good - we probably shouldn't be doing it!

Acquiring "trophies" is theft

In times past it was not uncommon to see memorabilia from a large or interesting bust or search warrant displayed in the office of one of the involved officers. Frequently these items were taken from the scene without any thought about who might own them. Examples POST has seen include medallions of a particular saint that drug runners carried to protect them, a stop watch, odd or unusual guns, gang symbols, and cheap metal art pieces of a skull and cross bones design. An officer might rationalize that they were abandoned property, not valuable, worthless or contraband. POST decisions make it clear that taking mementos is unacceptable and unprofessional conduct and it may be criminal as well.

A.R.S. 13-1802(A)(4) provides that if a person comes into control of lost or mislaid property under circumstances providing means of inquiry as to the true owner and takes the property without reasonable efforts to notify the true owner, that person has committed theft. Any property under the control of a peace officer needs to be handled properly, in compliance with the law and the department policies on seized or found property. POST takes the position that submitting found property in accordance with policy is a means of inquiry as to the true owner. Policies usually have a time period within which the true owner can claim the property before it is considered abandoned. If there are not other more reasonable means of inquiring as to the true owner's identity, submission of found property in accordance with department policy is adequate.

If an officer possesses a "trophy" obtained after fully complying with written department policies concerning found property, there would not likely be a POST issue. However, POST views taking anything that does not belong to you and using it to be misconduct that usually calls for disciplinary action.

Additional training records will be inspected at all agencies

With the new year, comes the annual inspection of individual officer training records for 2005. Soon the Compliance Specialists will begin scheduling the inspection with your agency.

As a condition of maintaining certification, all full authority officers are required to annually qualify with their firearm, which also includes a target identification and judgment course, and complete eight hours of continuing training. Additionally, officers below the rank of first line supervisor must receive eight hours of proficiency training every three years.

With the addition of officers in rapidly growing agencies currently and in the future, comes the need to increase the number of randomly selected individual training records for inspection. This modest increase will provide a more accurate assessment of compli-

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Introducing staff member Donna Freed

The POST Newsletter is proud to introduce Compliance Section Administrative Secretary, Donna Freed. If you are a POST



Donna Freed

Resource center user you may already have had the pleasure of meeting Donna, as she served in the resource center for almost three years before assuming her current assignment, and was instrumental in organizing that

activity toward a more customer friendly program. A Phoenix resident for the past 33

years, Donna was born and raised in Deming, New Mexico, in a family that included five brothers.

Before coming to POST Donna worked for many years at Honeywell. During most of her tenure at Honeywell Donna was an executive secretary, although she filled other positions as well. Prior to her work with Honeywell Donna had a very personally rewarding job at the Life Development Institute where she helped young adults with attention deficit disorder make the transition to productive adulthood.

Donna and her husband, Dale, have three children and eight grandchildren with more on the way. In her spare time she enjoys cooking, sewing, reading, and gardening (POST staff members will attest that she is an expert gardener, as she often shares her outstanding fresh fruits and vegetables with the rest of the office).

Training records ...

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ance by the agency and the individual officer.

Under the new AZ POST policy, agencies will be identified in one of the following categories as to the number of officers and training records to be inspected during the initial phase of the audit:

Category 1: Agencies with more than 800 sworn peace officers will have 40 training records inspected.

Category 2: Agencies with between 300 and 800 sworn peace officers will have 25 training records inspected.

Category 3: Agencies with between 100 and 300 sworn peace officers will have 20 training records inspected.

Category 4: Agencies with less than 100

sworn peace officers will have 10 training records inspected.

Recently, the Board of AZ POST voted to restrict the certification of an officer for failing to satisfy the required training to retain certification. As a result of the Board's decision, the officer shall not engage in law enforcement duties, carry a firearm, wear or display a badge, wear a uniform, make arrests, perform patrol functions, or operate a police vehicle.

The Compliance Specialist assigned to your agency is always available to assist with questions in preparation of the annual inspection. Since its inception, the mission of AZ POST has been to enhance the professionalism and proficiency of law enforcement within the state. Once way to achieve this is by assuring that officers receive on-going, verifiable training throughout their careers.

ALEA ...

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"Hurtful ancillary comments serve no useful purpose other than injure. Civility is never out of fashion. Respect is never out of style. The emotional pummeling of recruits is unnecessary, unprofessional, and counter-productive. The use of positive reinforcement and imagery increases recruit performance, success, and is just the right thing to do."

As a result of Commander Nyhart's leadership and the fine efforts of ALEA staff, attrition during 2005 dropped to 18.6 %. Dean summarized his feelings on the topic with the following: "What is an acceptable attrition rate? I don't know. There are many other factors that influence attrition rates

that are out of the Academy's control. I only know that 32.4% is not acceptable nor is any rate where the staff may have arbitrarily or artificially contributed to it by improper action or inaction. Being too hard or too easy both have undesirable consequences, the challenge is to discover where, in this inexact science, the perfect balance is and exploit it."

The Newsletter salutes the efforts of ALEA staff in this important area. If you would like to read Commander Nyhart's complete report entitled Implementing Institutional Change in a Basic Training Police Academy, you can obtain an electronic copy from Sgt. Rick Watling at (601) 223-2514 or rwatling@azpost.gov.

Institute Update ...

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cial a valuable tool in combating crime in their neighborhoods. Crime Abatement, under A.R.S. 12-991 through 12-999, is a tool to correct properties regularly used in the commission of criminal activity. This eight-hour course is intended for law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, and community members interested in the basics of crime abatement.

There is new four hour program designed to discuss the various aspects of Human Trafficking. Officers will come away with a basic knowledge of the scope and serious nature of this problem and the initial steps needed to care for victims and to identify and prosecute suspects. Students will also learn the difference between human trafficking and human smuggling. Experts who work in the field will be on hand to instruct and to answer questions regarding the topic.

Finally, the Institute will be offering a very timely course entitled DNA Evidence: Identification, Collection and Preservation for Law Enforcement. This course was offered for the first time right after the first of this year and was extremely well-received.

This two-day program is intended for law enforcement and emergency first responder groups involved with the identification, collection and preservation of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) evidence. It can be adapted for any group interested in sharing the responsibility of ensuring the integrity and use of DNA evidence. The overall goal of the program is to give law enforcement and other criminal justice professionals the information they need concerning the collection and usage of DNA evidence so that critical pieces of evidence will be collected, fewer cases will be jeopardized by the mishandling of evidence, and more cases could be solved by the proper use of this technology. This information will enhance their ability to make sound DNA evidence collection decisions. This program will create a context in which evidence identification, collections, transportation, storage and usage can be applied to scenario-based situations. Participants will have the opportunity to apply newly acquired knowledge by working in crime scene simulation exercises.

"If the going is real easy, beware, you may be headed down hill."
- unknown



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